I: Good morning/afternoon and thank you very much for taking the time to help me with my bachelor's thesis research paper.

I want to start by giving you some legal information regarding data protection.

The treatment of all the information collected during this interview is anonymous. The information will be stored under a pseudonym and will be used exclusively for my thesis study. I need you to sign the data consent within the protocols of the University that I'm serving my bachelor's theses. This interview has neither any benefit nor risk for you and you can leave it at any time.

I would like to ask for your consent to record this conversation, as this would make it easier for me to analyze the data later. I will also be taking some small notes during the conversation. Is that okay with you?

R11: Yes.

I: This interview is a study about the perceptions of sustainability in the eyes of consumers, specifically within the food packaging industry. There are no right or wrong answers, so we ask you to be as honest and objective as you can. Again, rest assured that the content of the interview is anonymous and used only for my thesis paper.

Do you have any questions before we start?

R11: No, thank you.

I: Perfect! So the first question is how would you personally define sustainability?

R11: Sustainability is the ability to reuse what we have created in the first place.

I: Can you elaborate on that? As in materials or as in resources?

R11: I would say yes mainly materials and resources as well. For example if we make a milk package how can we reuse that and make it more sustainable by using pre-used or reused materials and then reusing that same package again so it becomes a circular chain instead of linear.

I: And to what extent would you say you're concerned about environmental issues? Are you taking any actions in your daily routine to contribute to environmental sustainability?

R11: Yes I think it's very important. I personally value it a lot. I recycle, I'm very keen on that. I don't like purchasing from brands that I know are not sustainable. I always look at if it's sustainable on the packaging, if they have a good reputation. For example, in my office I'm in the sustainability group so I definitely take action to improve what I can inside my life circle.

I: So you just said you look for signs on a packaging if it's sustainable, what kind of signs do you look for? Is it like certain words or symbols or anything like that?

R11: For example, I have this app called Yuka that scans products so it tells me if it's sustainable, if it has done animal testing, how many ingredients it has, etc. If it has many chemicals in it, I'm not super keen on buying it because obviously chemicals are not good for the environment so trying to reduce that as much as possible. Again, the less ingredients the better. If I see that water is the main ingredient with plus 2 natural ingredients then I am more likely to buy that. And then just the overall reputation of the brand that I am aware of. For example, Pantene. I know that's not my number 1 because I know they are not super sustainable, and I know that the bigger parent company that holds Pantene, even though they try to be sustainable there's a lot of greenwashing involved so I'm not very keen to buy from those big companies.

I: Perfect. So my third question is what do you care about when you buy packaged goods? What do you pay attention to? Is it color, packaging material, any visuals, size?

R11: Packaging material for sure. For example, if I am buying moisturizer and I see that the packaging material is paper based, I'm more likely to buy that. If it is hard plastic, I don't think that would make me not buy it but it makes me want to not buy it because I know that it isn't as sustainable. I would say if they say anything on the package itself, I'm probably going to trust it especially if it is a small local brand. I think my top would be more local brands especially because, I think this is looking a bit into it, but transportation costs like CO2 emissions from transportation will be lower so that makes me want to buy from them.

I: What kind of packed goods do you buy? Can you give me some examples of packed goods you have bought lately? (ex. Milk, veggies, frozen food, etc)

R11: So I've bought milk, moisturizer, shampoo, water.

I: Okay, and among the products you mentioned, have you noticed if there were any sustainable products?

R11: Yes, so for example the water, I check if the bottle has been recycled. Of course many times the only option you have is the one that hasn't been reused already, but if there is that option I will always pick that option. The moisturizer, yes the packaging was actually paper based so I was more likely to buy that. And the milk package, I think they say on the package that it is made of 33% recycled material.

I: How do you assess if a product is environmentally sustainable/green? What criteria do you use when you look at a product to decide if it is sustainable or not?

R11: I'd say the nature of the product. For example, if it is Nutella, well I know that it has palm oil which is not the best thing. If it has avocado, I know there is a lot of deforestation involved to get avocado plants, so I know that even though it is put as green, I know that whenever there is avocado involved it is not the most sustainable. And as I said before, chemicals, brand reputation, if it is from a big corporation it is more difficult for them to be sustainable and actually be so yeah. And I think packaging itself as well.

I: My last open-ended question is what elements of a product make you think it is eco-friendlier than another, regardless if you buy it or not? So is there certain packaging material, or certain colors, certain visuals that you see that give you the impression of it being eco-friendly?

R11: I think for sure if it is brown or paper-looking, I automatically think it is so much more sustainable even though that may not be accurate at all. If it is brown definitely. And then the texture itself. If it is on the rougher side I know that it is more sustainable. Honestly, if it is not super pretty, it's probably because they are putting more effort into being eco-friendly, right? So if they have hard plastic, if it looks very pretty and colorful, they are using more artificial things to make it that catchy so I would not care going into an uglier, more rougher looking or paper looking packaging because I know that is going to be more natural.

I: So you think packaging that looks more earthy, less processed is more eco-friendly. Okay perfect. So now I am now going to show you a series of photos of a variety of packaged goods. Please classify each of them based on which one you believe is the most and/or least sustainable. I ask that you provide a brief explanation of why you feel this way about each series of products.

So this is the first, it is the same brand and same product just packaged in three different ways. So which of these three do you think is the most sustainable?

R11: I would say the crystal one, the glass bottle on the left because I feel like that's more easily reusable and it is harder glass. And then, I'm really not sure how sustainable or recyclable cans are but I would say the plastic one is semi-recyclable I'm not sure. So glass 1, then plastic 2, then the can 3.

I: Ok, this is the second one.

R11: I'd go for the same. Number 1 glass, number 2 plastic, number 3 can.

I: Okay, for the same reasons as the first? You think glass is the most reusable and recyclable.

R11: Yes, and I would say it is the better quality so it will last longer.

I: Okay, third one.

R11: Okay, so in this case, I would go with the glass jar. Number 2, I would say the bigger plastic jar just because it has more quantity so it is using less plastic per quantity of mayo, and then the third would be the smaller bottle.

I: So the second group is the same packaging material but different brands. So which one would you pick out of these three?

R11: I would like to look into where the brands come from. So if the parent brand is big, I would be more suspicious of it. So for example, this [Noosa] is a more local smaller brand so I would pick that one. And then, I believe Chobani would be second and Yoplait would be third.

I: And do you think there is anything besides the parent company but about the packaging that you would point out?

R11: Hmm, I would just say they are all very similar so I would look into how much quantity each has. Like the bigger the better.

I: Okay, and out of these three?

R11: Um, okay since they all look kind of the same I would think the bigger one is the most sustainable. So the Simply Orange, then Minute Maid, then Tropicana.

I: Out of these three?

R11: Okay, is this paper based?

I: Yes.

R11: Okay, so I would do the Land O'Lakes first because it is a bigger and paper-based packaging, then the President, then the Kerrygold.

I: Out of these three?

R11: Okay, so in this case because I don't know much about the brands and to be honest, I probably wouldn't look into the brands when shopping for jam, I would go for the bigger container again. So I guess that would be Smuckers, Bonne Maman, the Welch's, but I would mainly focus on the size of the container.

I: Out of these three?

R11: Okay, I would go for the ones that are more… I don't think I would prioritize sustainability here; I would pick the ones that are the most natural. So Triscuit looks like it would be the most natural. Actually, no. WheatThins, then Triscuit, then the other one.

I: So to clarify, you are saying WheatThins is the most sustainable right?

R11: Yes, just because it says 100% whole grain, I would trust that. And it says no artificial flavors. After that, the Triscuit looks more sustainable, and then the Club crackers look a bit more fake.

I: Okay got it. What about these three?

R11: Okay, so I would go for the Seventh Generation because there is more data on the bottle so it seems they are more transparent as a brand. The Dawn is not transparent at all. It doesn't tell me anything about where it comes from, so I would rank that third. So I would rank it as Seventh Generation, Palmolive, then Dawn.

I: Okay, so you like that there are clear statistics on the bottle?

R11: Yeah, because it means they are not scared of showing their data.

I: Okay, got it. So the third group is different packaging materials and different brands. So what do you think about this series?

R11: Hmm, so in this case I would look into all of the ingredients that they have because at first glance they look the same, but I feel like they will definitely have different ones. So I would prioritize glass again, and it is also the bigger one. And then, I would go for the smaller brand so I think that would be Pace and then Jack's Special.

I: Okay so to clarify, your ranking is On the Border as the most sustainable, then Pace, then Jack's?

R11: Yeah, but I'm not sure about this one.

I: No that's perfect. What about these three?

R11: Okay so for this one I would go for the smaller brand, so that would be SunBest Natural Almond Granola. Just looks like it would include the same amount as the others as well. I'd follow that with the one that has the bigger container, so I think that's Quakers, and then the Honey Bunches.

I: These three?

R11: Okay so for this one, the fact that it [Volleman's] says fresh from our farm would really get me, so I would go for that one. The Volleman's, followed by Fairlife, and then Horizon Organic.

I: Okay, I think this is the last one. What about these three?

R11: Okay, so I would go for the bigger container, so Chameleon Organic, and then Califia cold brew. Actually, no. The Rise because it tells me that it is USDA Organic, and then the Califia Farms.

I: Perfect. So in general, you feel like if the packaging is bigger, then they are using less plastic or less packaging per product.

R11: Yes exactly.

I: Okay, so I just have one follow-up question. Did you perceive any kind of greenwashing from any of the brands we have reviewed today? In case you are not familiar with greenwashing, it is defined as

intentionally misleading or deceiving consumers with false claims about a firm's environmental practices and impact. So did you think any of the brands we saw today seemed to be trying to greenwash their products?

R11: Yeah, I think some I noticed especially in bigger companies that may have to be out there about how they are sustainable are putting metrics that are really basic on their packaging. So for example, USDA Organic, a lot of times that product HAS to be organic, but they will put it out there so that you are like "oh wow it's organic!" but that should be the norm. So I think that is one. I think the issue comes in the question of the other things they are doing behind that metric so I think that is how they try to get consumers when in reality they should be doing a lot more than that.

I: And did you notice anything else about the visuals or colors?

R11: I think if they use anything green, like if they put a leaf on it, for example out of the three dish soaps the one that had a leaf, that would have caught my attention, so that is one method. And to me, making it more transparent seems like it may be completely psychological but to me that is more sustainable, like if I can clearly see the product. If the packaging is transparent and basic with just metrics, I would probably go for that one.

I: Perfect, thank you so much for your help!